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March 1, 2007

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON LAND USE
MEETING IN JOINT SESSION WITH THE PLANNING BOARD

The Committee on Land Use held a meeting on March 1, 2007, with Chairman Sean O'Donovan presiding and Committee Members Aldermen Maryann Heuston and Thomas Taylor also present and voting. Also present were Aldermen William White, Bruce Desmond, Dennis Sullivan, Walter Pero and Rebekah Gewirtz, members of the Planning Board, Solicitor John Gannon, George Landers from ISD and several concerned citizens.

The committee held a public hearing on the proposed zoning amendment to create a new Planned Unit Development B1 (PUD-B1) Overlay District and amend the zoning map to designate certain parcels as a PUD-B1 Overlay District.

Chairman O'Donovan recused himself from this meeting on advice of the City Solicitor. Vice Chairman Heuston presided over the remainder of the meeting and stated that the committee would hear testimony from those present.

Michael Gleebe, Director of Planning, gave a brief overview of the matter at hand and what could be built as of right, and said that the parcel would need to be subdivided, creating approximately 25 –26 lots

Traffic Engineer Terry Smith stated that the city has negotiated with the developer to ensure that traffic would not exceed the present pattern on Cedar and Lowell Streets. New state of the art traffic signal lights, controllers and pedestrian signals will be provided that will allow traffic to flow more readily. A bump out will be installed at Clyde and Cedar Streets to prevent parking near the corner. The Alpine Street area will get a traffic calming device as will the Vernon and Lowell Street areas. The developer will also provide funds to improve other areas. Mr. Smith believes that traffic would be better than it is now. He also noted that the ramp from the site connects to the bridge – which is owned by the state – so the requirements would be governed by state.

Mr. Landers spoke about the expected problem with rodents. He said that the site has been examined by ISD and the Fire Department and that there is evidence of birds being in the building. A sign off sheet from a licenses pest control company will be required and that company must have a transport license as

well. The site will be baited and the captured animals will be transported and released, as required by law. ISD inspectors will inspect the site as needed.

The owner of the site, Stephen Smith, said that the community input over the past 4 years has made the project better and that the zoning makes possible the construction of 65 units and 110 bedrooms, public accessible open space, bike and pedestrian access, affordable housing, \$220,000 for traffic improvements and an energy efficient design.

There were several other speakers in favor of the proposal and their remarks and concerns are summarized here:

- the proposal is more than zoning, it's zoning with a covenant
- the neighborhood is not opposed to phase 1, 65 units and 110 bedrooms
- requested that raised tables be in place prior to the ramp being brought to a safe and level position.
- this project is the type of development that the state has been advocating for
- the plan is more comprehensive than expected
- the covenant overshadows what could be done with the site, therefore the covenant needs to be modified
- concerns regarding demolition, hazardous waste and lead paint
- what will be used to trap the possums, raccoons, coyotes, etc. in the area
- it would be a benefit to community to have the site developed
- covenants are critical and they won't delay the community path
- would like developer to remove railroad tracks along the bike path
- would like the project to include the community path from Cedar Street to Lowell Street

Speaker opposing the project expressed concerns, as follows:

- the project would allow up to 199 units on a site surrounded by 3 streets in a small neighborhood.
- the MBTA intends to locate a stop in the vicinity with or without the development
- city is dense now and this project would add to the density
- proposal would add too many units and result in more traffic congestion
- there are presently 497 condos for sale in Somerville and Cambridge with 4,000 more to come on the market in the near future. Fearful that the developer will become a renter – not a seller
- not a great site
- none of the meetings held mean a thing if the covenant made behind closed doors takes precedence
- city is losing its sense of community

Wig Zamore told those present that the Green Line proposal has been forwarded to the EPA, and that, hopefully, details will be forthcoming and should be considered in the development of this area. Alan Moore, speaking as the Chair of the Somerville Bicycle Committee, stated that the Committee is not taking a position on the matter and he submitted a list of recommended changes.

Mr. Landers responded to some of the concerns mentioned and stated that with lead paint removal, the danger is the dust, not the paint, therefore, the Fire Department will be on site to hose down the demolition, as mandated. Baiting of the property will begin now and will be ongoing. The bird droppings will be removed prior to demolition.

Alderman Sullivan requested that copy of the traffic mitigation agreement be forwarded to him. Alderman Taylor requested copies of the traffic mitigation report and the covenants.

Both the Planning Board and the Land Use Committee will keep their records open until noon on March 8th to receive additional written comments.

No Papers were acted on.

Alderman Maryann Heuston, Vice Chairman
Committee on Land Use

COMMITTEE REPORT

Report of the Committee on Land Use
meeting in Joint Session with the Planning
Board, March 1, 2007

In Board of Aldermen

Clerk